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**In this Edition**

Talking birds and a collection of stones **P.1**

Chanukah Candles when camping - Part 1 **P.2**

**Talking birds and a collection of stones**

The Parsha of Vayeitzei is something we should all be able to relate to, after all it tells the story of our own Neshama and its journey to this world.

Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and travels to Charan. One his way he spends the night on the Temple Mount. He takes a bunch of stone and places them around his head. The following morning, the stones have fused into one and Yaakov stands this stone up as a monument. He anoints the monument with oil and pledges; *when I return to my father's house, Hashem will be my G-d and this stone which I have stood as a monument will be a House of G-d.*

The Alter Rebbe (Torah Ohr Vayeitzei) explains the deeper meaning of this story, with specific focus on the significance of the stones and Yaakov's promise.

The letters which spell the word Charan (חֲרָן) when rearranged spell the word נָחַר. We find this word in Tehillim (69:4) when Dovid Hamelech says נָחַר גְּרוֹנִי, my throat is dried. Like a dry, hoarse throat which blocks the flow of one's voice, Charan represents the blockage and concealment of Hashem's light from shining in the world.

Each Neshama descends into this world, a world of Charan, a world which hides the presence of its Creator and appears as an independent existence. The Neshama's mission is to enter this world and through Torah, Mitzvos and Emunah, transform it to a place of G-dly revelation.

The blockage of Charan is created by the letter ח, a letter which is associated with Kelipah. Through the Avodah of *Birurim*, refining the coarse world of Charan, the ח is transformed into a ה, a letter (which is similar to the ח in shape, but is) associated with Kedusha.

(We find a similar idea in the difference between Chametz חָמֵץ which represents arrogance and Kelipah and Matzah מַצָּה, which represents humility and Kedusha. Here too, the difference between the two words is one letter, Matzah has a ה in place of the ח in Chametz.)

When the ח of Charan is transformed and the letters once again rearranged, we spell the word חֲנֻכָּה, a loud and joyous song, where the voice is

able to emanate unhindered and be expressed in its full force and beauty.

This Avodah is represented by the stones. Yaakov takes the many stones which represent the hidden sparks of G-dliness which are trapped and hidden within the world. He gathers them and elevates them to a level of oneness with their source. The pouring of the oil down this pillar alludes to the Divine light which this Avodah draws down into the world.

Yaakov says that through this he will return to the house of his father, Yitzchak. Yitzchak comes from the term laughter but written in future tense. This refers to the tremendous joy and pleasure which Hashem receives from our Avodah of refining the world. This pleasure will be revealed in the times of Moshiach for the Neshama itself to experience.

Why is it that the refining of the world generates so much joy above?

Joy comes from something novel and unexpected. The Alter Rebbe illustrates this point with an example of a talking parrot. It is only because the nature of the parrot is that it does not talk, that makes the talking parrot the source of enjoyment and delight. The fact that a human being can talk is no cause from great delight, because that is what they are expected to do.

For the spiritual worlds and the realm of the angels to be surrendered to Hashem and radiate His presence is not novel.

But when a world which conceals G-dliness becomes an expression of Hashem's presence, when the hoarse voice of Charan become the beautiful song of Rinah, when dull and inanimate stones become a conduit for G-dly revelation, this is something unique and completely novel.

Chassidus encapsulates this mission in a simple phrase; Hashem creates the worlds **יש מאין**, something from nothing, in order for us to transform the **יש** back to **אין**. When we transform the something-ness of the world back to nothing, surrendering the world back to a state of oneness of Hashem, this is the most joyous song of all.

# The weekly Halacha analysis

## Chanukah candles when camping—Part 1

### Rabbi Yonason Johnson

#### Do Chanukah Candles require a house?

The first issue at hand is to establish whether the Mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is a Mitzvah on the individual (חובת גברא) or a Mitzvah on the house (חובת בית).

The Nafka Minah (practical difference) would be whether an individual who does not have a house in which to light is obligated or exempt.

Secondly, if we determine that the Mitzvah is on the house, do temporary accommodations such as a campervan or tent qualify as a house for this purpose?

#### The Gemora and Rishonim

The Gemora<sup>1</sup> teaches that the Mitzvah of Chanukah is Ner Ish Ubeiso – one candle for a man and his house. Many of the halachos concerning where to light the Menorah relate to positioning it at the doorway of a house. The Gemora seems to connect the Mitzvah to having a house.

Rambam<sup>2</sup> writes that the Mitzvah of Chanukah is that each house (כל בית ובית) should light. This language also suggests that the Mitzvah is on the house.

Another source is based on the ruling of the Gemora<sup>3</sup> that one who sees Chanukah candles should make the some of the Brachos even when they will not be lighting themselves – this is referred to as Birchos Haroeh. We do not find a similar idea by any other Mitzvah. Why?

Tosfos<sup>4</sup> explains that these blessings were instituted because of the specialness of the miracle and also because many people do not have houses and are unable to fulfil the Mitzvah. This is similar to Mezuzah which can only be fulfilled when one has a house. Tosfos is of the opinion that one must have a house to fulfil the Mitzvah.

Rashi, quoting Rabbeinu Yitzchak ben Yehudah, explains that Birchos Haroeh was only established for someone who has not lit yet in his house or someone who is on a boat (and will not light). This is also referenced by the Rosh<sup>5</sup>. Why would someone on a boat not be able to light?

Maharsham<sup>6</sup> explains that since the boat does not have a roof so that the wind blows into it, it is not considered a house and is therefore exempt from lighting.

Az Nidberu<sup>7</sup> argues on the explanation of the Maharsham. It could be that Rashi is discussing someone who does not have the ability to light on the boat because he does not have candles. Alternatively he may not have permission to light on the boat. This argument is also advanced by the Tzitz Eliezer quoted below.

In contrast to Rashi, Orchos Chaim<sup>8</sup> Hilchos Chanukah writes that one who is travelling on a boat should indeed light Chanukah candles with the blessings. There are those who explain that the Machlokes between Rashi and the Orchos Chaim concerning a boat, revolves around the issue at hand i.e. whether the Mitzvah is on the person or on the house.

#### The Acharonim

Pnei Yehoshua<sup>9</sup> explains that the Mitzvah of Chanukah differs from other Mitzvos which are Chovas Haguf and must be done by each person individually (e.g. Tefillin and Lulav). Since the Mitzvah is to light the candles near the Reshus Harabim to publicise the miracle, the Chachomim established the Mitzvah as though it is an obligation on the house.

Sfas Emes<sup>10</sup> discusses whether Chanukah candles are like Mezuzah and dependant on the house, or whether they are an obligation on the person.

The Bach<sup>11</sup> is of the view that the Mitzvah is a Mitzvah on the individual. For this reason when one has already lit themselves, they may only make the brachos on behalf of someone else if the other person is present.

Aruch Hashulchan<sup>12</sup> writes clearly that the Mitzvah is on the individual and therefore even someone who does not have a house (in which they would be lighting) must light.

He also explains that even though the Halocho is that a traveller is discharged by his wife lighting at home, he may nonetheless have in mind not to be Yotzai and then light his own candles with a Bracha<sup>13</sup> and that this is the widespread practise of Bochorim and guests.

The classic Teshuvah referenced in this discussion (and quoted above) is the Maharsham<sup>14</sup> who writes that one who is travelling on a train should light candles with a Bracha. Because one pays for their seat and is able to eat and sleep there, the train becomes like a house that they are renting<sup>15</sup>.

The train is different to the boat mentioned by Rashi, as it does have a roof and the wind does not blow inside. If the boat would have a roof, we would also light candles.

Maharsham's view certainly requires a house for Chanukah candles, however there is no need that it be a permanent dwelling.

The Tzitz Eliezer<sup>16</sup> was asked about travellers who will be sleeping out in the open or in tents. He takes the approach of the Bach that the Mitzvah is on the individual and does not require a house. He therefore rules that even when sleeping in the open, one should light Chanukah candles with a blessing. Certainly this would be so when sleeping in tents.

Az Nidberu<sup>17</sup> likewise argues that there is no basis to those who claim that the Mitzvah of Chanukah candles depends on a house<sup>18</sup>. Therefore one may light with the Brachos wherever they are.

Mishna Halachos<sup>19</sup> writes about lighting Chanukah candles when travelling overnight by car. If one will reach their destination during the night, they should certainly delay lighting candles until they arrive. He quotes the Maharsham<sup>20</sup> but notes that a car may differ from a train carriage. However he concludes that the obligation is in fact on the individual who should light wherever they are.

Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch rules like the Maharsham that we require a house. He rules that soldiers who are sleeping in tents in the fields should not light Chanukah candles, rather if they are married, they should rely on their wife lighting at home. A single soldier relies on their parents lighting at home.

1. Shabbos 21b
2. Hilchos Chanukah 4:1
3. 23a
4. Sukkah 46a ד"ה הרואה
5. Siman 8
6. Shu"t Maharsham 4:146
7. 6:75
8. Rabbi Aharon of Lunil a 13th century Rishon
9. Shabbos 21a
10. Shabbos 21a
11. OC 667 מצאתי ד"ה
12. OC 677:5
13. Magen Avraham 677:9 based on the Terumas Hadeshen. See Mishna Berura 677:14
14. ibid
15. Yemei Chanukah quoting Chovas Hadar writes that one does not need to actually rent the "house" to be able to light there. It is sufficient that they have the right to be there and use the dwelling.
16. 15:29
17. ibid
18. Although see the footnote there that he was later shown the Maharsham
19. 7:86